



Covenant House Toronto

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May 13, 2014

Affordable Housing Committee, City of Toronto  
c/o City Clerk's Office  
City Hall, 100 Queen Street West  
Toronto ON M5H 2N2

*Re: AH8.2 – New Transitional Housing for Young Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking*

Dear Members of the Affordable Housing Committee:

Covenant House Toronto supports the proposal for New Transitional Housing for Young Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking. We applaud the City of Toronto, one of the first municipalities in the country, to take the lead in combating this growing challenge.

As the country's largest agency for homeless youth, we have offered our support and services for more than 30 years to homeless victims of domestic trafficking and sexual exploitation and to those who find themselves here from other countries.

We provide hands-on services to these young people and are strong advocates working to improve support services and raise awareness of these issues. Our international organization, including sites in Canada, the U.S. and Latin America, has long been a recognized leader in combating human trafficking and sexual exploitation globally. We also collaborate with many community agencies dedicated to helping prevent and address human trafficking and exploitation.

There is no doubt that these horrific crimes are major problems in our city. We know that almost half of the 77 human trafficking charges laid in Canada between 2006 and 2011 were in Toronto.

Our agency sees at least a dozen young trafficked and sexually exploited victims, primarily young women, annually. But this number is likely far higher as young people are often too fearful to disclose their experiences. These youth are among the most damaged that we serve and often need long-term support for physical and psychological problems, including post-traumatic stress and addiction.

Our staff help them in rebuilding their lives through counselling and our on-site programs, including educational and vocational services, job training and health care. We also help

youth navigate the justice system in the event that they are prepared to lay charges. We help those from other countries with immigration issues and work closely with law enforcement agencies on related activities.

We believe there are compelling reasons for specialized, transitional housing for these young victims. Their needs are different than adults. The complexity of their issues requires more intense counselling/support for psychological issues, e.g., post-traumatic stress. They would benefit from expert, dedicated staff and peer support and have sanctuary and protection.

We urge the Affordable Housing Committee to approve this critical initiative to provide these victims with a safe, longer-term residential program with wrap-around supports similar to those in other major cities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Rivers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bruce Rivers, Executive Director  
Covenant House Toronto